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ESHUDÁS

A Monograph

A. H. S.

EMMANUEL



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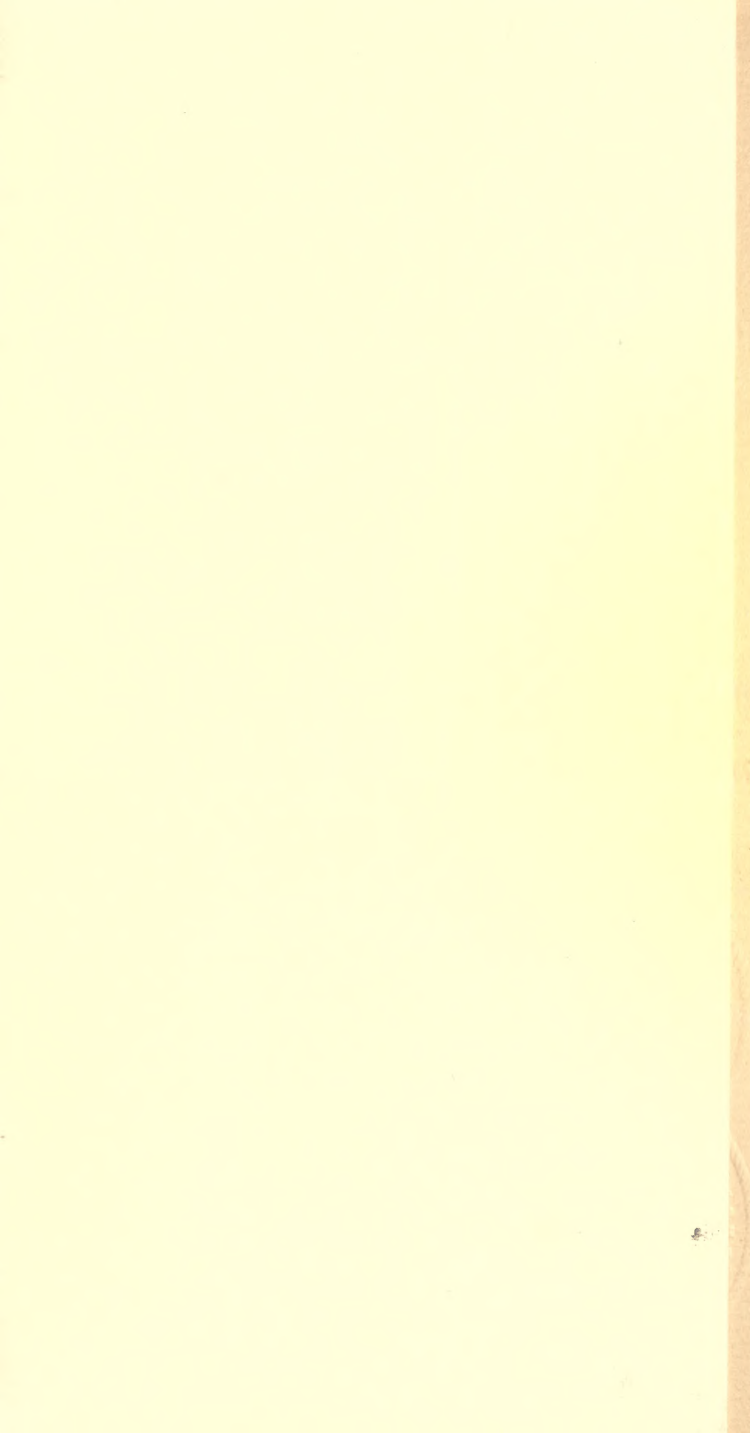
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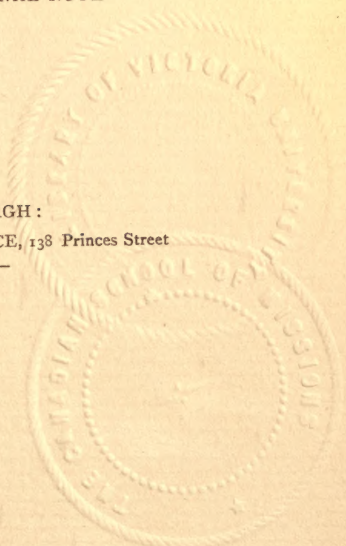
ANNIE H. SMALL

WITH A PREFATORY NOTE BY THE
REV. PRINCIPAL RAINY, D.D.

SECOND EDITION,
WITH ADDITIONAL NOTE

EDINBURGH:
MACNIVEN & WALLACE, 138 Princes Street

1902



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EMMANUEL



EK
Y

TO THE LOVED MEMORY OF HIM
WHO INSPIRED THIS LITTLE STUDY,
AND FOR WHOSE SOLE PLEASURE
IT WAS AT FIRST UNDERTAKEN:
WHO HELD THE PEOPLE OF INDIA
IN HONOUR,
AND WHO GLADLY LIVED HIS LIFE
IN THEIR SERVICE—

MY FATHER,
JOHN SMALL OF POONA.

Born at Arbroath, December 4th, 1833.
Arrived in India, December 4th, 1863.
Worked as a Missionary for 35 years.
Died at Poona, May 9th, 1899.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND
EDITION.

"Is the story true?" The question has been asked by so many correspondents that I feel constrained to take the opportunity now offered, of replying to it once for all.

With the exception of the closing scenes, no incident is fictitious. The characters also were sketched from life. For reasons surely obvious, the setting is imaginary.

But I venture to think that my little story is true with a deeper truth than had it been the record of a special unique instance of conversion. Yeshudás was intended to represent, for the sympathy of friends of India, a great unseen procession of souls, who, after the same solitary manner, are feeling their way towards the Light of God. I have myself met one and another of these; and since the little book reached India, letters from missionaries in almost every part of the land have arrived, telling of men and women whose history is almost parallel to that of Yeshudás. I take the liberty of quoting one of these letters:—

"I cannot easily say how interested and touched I was by its perusal. To me whose life is spent amid the scenes and the people you describe, the story came home with peculiar force and freshness. I believe the special phase of the coming of God's Kingdom, apart from what we deem the ordinary channels, is far more common than we know; even amongst the poor Katkars there is one man who told me that before our coming he had been praying that help might come to his people. He said, 'It seemed that God had forgotten us. But we met, you a bird of one country, I a bird of another, and I knew God had heard.' The hungry souls are satisfied beyond our imagining."

A. H. S.

EDINBURGH, 15th January 1903.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS little book is not in the usual line of mission literature. That literature naturally and properly selects from missionary experience some of the cases which illustrate the happy working of missionary diligence and missionary method. It does not try to disguise the disappointment and failure which form part of missionary experience ; but it does try especially to bring home to British Christians how the harvest ripens in mission fields, and how fruit is gathered unto life eternal.

Naturally, however, one desires to attain a somewhat more broad and various impression of the way in which practically the Hindu mind (to speak now only of that) works in its contact with

Christianity, alike in cases where the Christian message is finally received, and in cases where that does not seem to be the result. Those who have read a small work by the present authoress, *Suwártá*, will remember how much of its singular charm depended on the vivid pictures of Hindu women, with their native impressions and surroundings coming under Christian influences, not always with the result a Christian desires, but always so as to present a moral situation that not only interests the heart, but that sets one thinking.

The narrative which follows suggests rather how Christ may find His own through very dim uncertain echoes of the glad tidings, coming to souls that have begun to thirst. Sometimes, as in the case of the Karens of Burmah, whole tribes

seem to be seized with a desire for light which they know they have not got. So, also, solitary souls sitting in great darkness may be led to set forth seeking goodly pearls. Their path, before they find and make sure of the pearl of great price, must needs be arduous and perilous. Always, also, such seekers must start from their own door, wherever that may be. We need not limit the ways in which the great promise is fulfilled. Everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth. To those who ask of Him, He will give living water. It is, no doubt, our part to use with zeal the appointed means; but we are glad to believe that the Shepherd of Souls works without and above means beyond all that we are able to ask or think.

ROBERT RAINY.

PROLOGUE.

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife . . . What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed: and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

PROLOGUE.

ALL time-honoured customs are faithfully observed in the ancient city of Morwára.

As is surely most fitting.

For, at a few miles' distance only, near the mouth of the river, is a New Morwára ; which with the name, has grasped the population also, and the trade in silver and brass, the government offices for the district, the railway stations, all indeed which could be grasped, leaving nothing to the mother city save her hoary walls, old - world streets, historic family names, and her conservatisms. Within these last, the loyal souls who guard her honour have entrenched themselves and her. Since the days of the fathers, say they, all things have con-

tinued as they were ; aye, and shall continue.

Thus it came to pass that when the leading citizen, Vish-nupant the Wealthy, sought a bride for his only son, he avoided New Morwára, where unsettling doctrines from the West already prevailed to an alarming extent, and chose his daughter-in-law from the distant but orthodox village of Punyapur.

It was at midnight, upon the 12th of April 1885, according to Western reckoning, that the crazy city gate, yielding to the pressure of its aged key, swung open to admit the bride and her escort.

There was no sleep for Mor-wára that night. As one torch-bearer or another replenished his flickering torch along the route through the winding lanes,

there flashed into view and as rapidly vanished into darkness group after group of eager faces framed in verandah or archway; while a throng of happy young folks who had gone forth early in the evening to meet the bride, now formed a part of her following. Men, women, and little ones chattered and laughed merrily, musicians wailed, bullock-drivers shrieked, and hundreds of pariah dogs, defrauded of their nightly raid upon the deserted bazaars, swelled the chorus with howls of bitter disappointment.

During many days and nights Morwára held high festival. Varied and gorgeous entertainment was provided at Vishnupant's *wádá*;¹ feasts for hundreds, *natches*² for thousands,

¹ Palace.

² Dances.

illuminations and fireworks for all. Were the benedictions of satiated guests heard of the gods, verily the newly-wedded couple were assured of health and wealth, and had the promise of many sons writ large upon their foreheads.

A novel theatrical performance suitably crowned the festivities, a missionary play. The conception was unique and happily not difficult of execution, for the clever young Brahman Venkatráo, had caught to admiration various little tricks of manner peculiar to the old missionary, Weston Saheb ; he had indeed many a time entertained his father's guests with rehearsals of the Padri Saheb's sermons.

On this occasion he excelled. His words, gestures, attitudes, mannerisms, are they not subject for pleasant gossip during

many a hookah-smoking siesta until this day? Arrayed in a suit of white drill, *suntopi*,¹ and umbrella in one hand, the familiar Book in the other, Venkatráo stood alone upon the platform. The service commenced with a popular hymn, the chorus of which was at once taken up by the audience and sung with spirit—

“Jesus, of heaven the Beloved—

Jesus, He only is of heaven the Beloved.”

The preacher now laid Testament and hat upon the table, deliberately removed his gold-rimmed spectacles, and leaning heavily with both hands upon his umbrella, began to speak. His voice was low and somewhat quavering, his manner was deeply earnest. It was the ever-new, ever-beautiful tale of

¹ Sunhat.

Him who was called Yesu, an Incarnation of the Great God ;¹ how He came to earth and lived among men, spoke words most gracious, and wrought for sheer human sympathy acts of kindness most marvellous ; how He cured the hopelessly diseased, fed thousands upon a few *chapattis*,² and raised even from the funeral bier those who were being borne to the burning-ghat ; yet how this gentle *Awatár*³ wandered homeless and—save for a few followers of low caste—friendless ; was despised, aye, hated for His very divineness of love ; was finally seized, tried upon false charges, condemned, and, in name of human justice forsooth, executed.

Here Venkatráo paused, over-

¹ Parameshwar.

² Scones.

³ Incarnate One.

powered apparently by the horror of that awful tragedy. His slim figure swayed, and was with difficulty steadied by the nervous grasp of his fingers upon the umbrella handle. His lips worked tremulously, and the eyelashes drooped over his brilliant eyes to veil the mist which dimmed them. To all seeming a vigorous effort of will was needful ere he again addressed his great audience.

But some subtle change had passed over the preacher. The sudden emotion was indeed subdued, held in leash as it were; but it remained a true emotion, living and striving within him, and giving to the closing sentences of the sermon an eloquence to which Padri Weston Saheb could lay no claim. It rose to passionate enthusiasm for this Incarnate One, it soft-

ened into tenderest appeal in His behalf, it rushed forth in rare and vivid illustrations from the re-births and transformations of Nature, compelling conviction that He, that very Yeshu whom they murdered, lived and breathed and spoke unto this day.

And now His power, His graciousness, His love, were set over against the evils and pains and miseries of this life, until these faded into mere shadow, while the good will of Yeshu became for one short moment the only good thing worth striving after.

The audience sat spell-bound when the voice ceased. Never had Morwára dreamed of acting such as this.

The meeting was thrown open for discussion according to Padri Weston Saheb's custom. Ques-

tions were asked and difficulties were propounded by certain associate performers whom Venkatráo had previously instructed. As these received smart replies from the platform, the mood of the so lately fascinated listeners changed rapidly, and they entered into this more lively phase of the "play" with equal zest. Ere long the fun waxed loud and riotous, and was carried on until long past midnight. The latest of the functions connected with the marriage at the *Wádá* was, without doubt, the most successful.

The following morning saw the dispersion of the many strangers who had been congregated at Morwára, and that ancient city sank once again into its wonted stagnation.

PART I.

NÁRAYÁN RÁO

PART I.
NĀRĀYAN RĀO.

*“ The very God ! think, Abib ; dost
thou think ?
So, the All-Great, were the All-
Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a
human voice
Saying, ‘ O heart I made, a heart
beats here !
Face, my hands fashioned, see it
in myself !
Thou hast no power nor mayst
conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself
to love,
And thou must love me who have
died for thee !’
The madman saith He said so :
it is strange.”*

CHAPTER I.

NÁRÁYAN, son of Rághávendráo, Brahman priest of Punyapur, feared the gods greatly. He had been trained from infancy in all the observances of worship. It was his much-loved daily task as a little child to carry for his mother the household offering when she paid her morning visit to the family temple. To his mother's teaching he owed his knowledge of the ancestral faith; she it was who explained to him the duties and privileges of the sacred Brahman order, initiated him into the manifold ritual of fast and festival, and inspired his soul with horror of the deadly sin of pollution. Many a legend of the gods and the *Ávatárs* did Náráyan and his playmate wife, Matúra, hear from her lips dur-

ing the long still hours of the day, foolish, worse than foolish, legends, yet surely rendered less hurtful by her simple religious spirit, else had they carried irreparable taint of evil into the spirits of her children.

It was a peaceful, innocent, sheltered life in that great *wáddá*; and the boy *Náráyan* knew no ambition save that of succeeding in due course to his father's office and dignity as hereditary priest of the City-of-religious-merit.¹

¹ *i.e.* *Punya-pur.*

CHAPTER II.

ONE sunny morning, as Náráyan emerged dripping and shining from the waters of the sacred tank wherein body and soul alike were daily cleansed, he heard his mother's soft call. In swift obedience to that voice he threw his newly-washed garments over his bare shoulders, sprang lightly up the steps of the tank, and ran through the side door into the *wáddá*. His mother met him upon the threshold, holding in her hands an *angarkha*¹ of finest mulmuslin, in which she speedily arrayed him.

“Now, my son,” she said, with a satisfied smile—for the soft folds of muslin fitly adorned the

¹ A long, flowing upper coat.

graceful form of her boy and his fair features seemed to her loving eyes more fair each day—
“thou must go to the temple thyself alone, carrying with thee the flowers and offerings. Thy father hath need of me in the *wádá*.”

He was a boy of few words. His reply was a low obeisance. He then raised the massive brazen salver upon his head and set off, full of boyish happiness yet with a new pride begotten of a new trust. He chose the longer route beyond the village wall that he might visit the mango grove and examine the young fruit upon the trees.

The morning was young, and the village sweepers¹ were still

¹ These are outcasts. As is suggested by the context, even the shadow of a sweeper falling upon a Brahman causes pollution.

busily employed upon the streets. They and the boy carefully avoided each other. But—it was his fate—as Náráyan turned a sharp corner the garments of a passing outcast brushed against his. The culprit, horror-stricken, implored pardon, then in dire dread of the vengeance of the haughty priest fled at full speed.

But Náráyan had still greater cause for fear. He was indeed shocked beyond measure. He could not go forward to the temple, he dared not return to his mother, he feared to bathe again even in a more distant tank, lest his father should see and question him, and even could he bathe his body there still remained the defiled *angarkha* and the polluted temple offering. He sat down under a mango tree to consider the difficulty.

Ah!—the dejection fled before the fresh inspiration—there was the holy well beside the hill temple. The distance was not great, and the old priest who lived a recluse life up there was said to be kind and good.

In a few minutes he was at the foot of the hill, and in a few more had run lightly up the old steps cut out of the solid rock and worn smooth by generations of sin-laden pilgrims. Poor boy! He too, for the first time in his life, had conscience of sin.

The well was soon found, and Náráyan bathed with care, sprinkled well his garments—though in grave doubt the while lest the purification were insufficient—and scrubbed his tray. This done, he walked round to the temple to beg of the priest fresh offerings for his own god. The old man welcomed the

child, accepted his tale of having lost his offering, gave him a fresh supply, and begged for another visit.

Out of this casual meeting with the holy recluse of the hill-temple arose a lasting friendship, and through the friendship came to the boy the revelation of a deeper and more satisfying ideal of worship than he had yet known. Náráyan was introduced to Nature ; he learned to glory in her mysterious powers recreative and destructive, to listen for her voices, and to prostrate himself in awe before her silences.

Led by his old friend he ventured still further and found that this great Universe was herself under law, and obeyed the Great Existence who dwelt within her. He found that the gods of his mother's Pantheon were but

emanations from the Existing One, the Creator of all, of Whom are all things, and before Whom all worshipping souls must bend in and through the lesser divinities. Nay, he found that he was himself nothing save a part of Brahma ; from Brahma he came, unto Brahma he should return.

And the spirits of the old man and the young became as one, while together they sought the Great Spirit, if haply they might, feeling after Him, find Him.

CHAPTER III.

NÁRÁYAN being of age to be left in charge of home and temple, his devout father went upon a long meditated pilgrimage.

The shrine to be visited was one of peculiar sanctity, the year and season were auspicious, and companies of the religious gathered from every town and village within five hundred miles.

Punyapur, the City - of - religious-merit, would not lag behind, and sent to the holy spot in the train of its priest a goodly band of pilgrims to perform the prescribed ritual ; to bathe in the river, prostrate themselves before the ruby-eyed god, present their offerings, drink of the sacred well, and to return cleansed from an evil conscience,

and bearing a store of merit which should avail for a lifetime.

Alas that the store of merit is not the sole reward of pilgrimage, that holy water is too frequently impure water, that the dreaded cholera goddess never fails to claim for herself many hundred victims from the pilgrim bands.

On this occasion she did her worst. She prowled hungrily up and down amongst the groups which squatted around the temple, marking this and that one for immediate sacrifice ; others she seized during their homeward journey ; with a very refinement of cruelty she permitted many to reach their distant homes, not only to die themselves, but to be in death her instrument for the destruction of the dear ones there.

The cost to Punyapur of the great pilgrimage was the desolation of many a home.

The young Náráyan awoke one morning, as from a frightful dream, to find himself alone. Father, mother, dearly-loved girl-wife, faithful family retainers, all had been carried away to the burning ghat ere the fell hand was stayed.

For many a day the lad wandered in and around the great empty house, and through the silent lanes of the village as one stunned.

Later, out of his sore desolation, bitter thoughts were born, and he spoke bitter words to his old friend of the hill-temple. As for the sage, he heard and answered not, but loved and waited.

CHAPTER IV.

YET surely—was he dreaming?
—Náráyan had heard of One,
an *Awatár*, Whose heart had
bled for men in their dire need.
Was there not a legend told to
him long ago—was it told by
his mother or by his old friend?—
of One who healed, not killed.

Where were His temples?
What castes would be of His
worshippers?

Strange that even the name
of the *Awatár* should be
forgotten! Strange that he,
Náráyan, could recall no *shloka*¹
in His honour, nor indeed any
tale of His adventures!

The very vagueness of this
memory troubled him; it was
as though the *wádá* were haunted
by a new and shadowy Figure.

¹ Sanskrit verse.

There was now no mother in the spacious house to whom he might appeal ; but the old priest, though he set little store by such legends, would certainly know this one, if indeed he had not himself told it in the early days of their companionship.

But no, Káshináthpant had either forgotten, or had never heard of this *Awatár* Whom Náráyan could so dimly recall ; and indeed ere the young man had seated himself upon the temple-step, he realised that neither from mother nor from priest nor from any man in Punyapur had he heard the tale ; but far away amid unwonted surroundings, dazzled by the blaze of illuminations, and bewildered by the coming and going of many strangers.

He had found his clue. He rose hastily, saluted his friend,

and ran down the hill to his own house; there he carefully closed the doors, threw himself upon his *razai*,¹ covered his eyes, and thought. Yes, he had travelled hundreds of miles for this one end, not for the marriage of his sister, now so long dead, but for the revelation of the Healing *Awatár*. He had sat with his mother in the women's verandah, and heard the legend from the lips of a young Brahman, only alas! child fashion, to forget it. Now, at whatever cost, he must recall the wondrous tale.

Power of word and of touch, power exerted only for good, power for good exerted without money and without price. Graciousness mysterious and unique; a Something for which

¹ Mat.

he could find no word, vague but heart-stirring. He was fain to weep for sheer sympathy with it.

Náráyan lay all the day in rapturous contemplation of the mere impersonal ideal which memory and thought conjured up of an Incarnation-of-Might-and-of-Pity.

What had been the end? Then did the young man fall into a despair deeper than when he set fire to the funeral pyre of his mother, for a scene of hopeless tragedy flashed vividly before him. He recalled that the Healer had Himself died, died by the hand of an executioner.

CHAPTER V.

WAS it after weeks or after days that the conviction began to haunt Náráyan, disturbing again the settled gloom of his spirit as the fall of a stone disturbs the still dark waters of a deep well, that the legend related by the young pundit was not thus hopeless, that it ended with life, not death?

Once again he lay with covered eyes and asked questions of the past; once again was memory faithful to her trust. The Healer had died,—how indeed could it be otherwise since He had taken upon Him human form?—but thereupon He had entered upon another and higher birth. The legend was not of defeat, it was a legend of victory.

Victory to the Healer! Vic-
tory! Victory! Victory!

Victory to the Powerful One
before Whose presence hunger,
disease, storm, aye, death itself,
crept dumbly away!

Victory to the Gracious One,
who journeyed up and down
the land healing, sympathising,
loving!

Victory to Him now as He
reaps His reward in a blissful
emancipation from the griefs
and burdens of human exist-
ence!

Victory! Victory! Victory!

CHAPTER VI.

BEHIND the *wáddá* lay a large square of garden ground, the only entrance to which was by a rarely-opened door from within the house. Long neglect had had its usual melancholy result, the enclosure had become one luxuriant tangled growth of rank jungle, fit home for many a repulsive and venomous creature.

Early one cold season morning the dwellers in this jungle were surprised and alarmed by a visit from its rightful owner, who made a careful survey of the miniature wilderness and proceeded to mark off a small piece of ground opposite the house door. This done, he threw aside his upper garments as one who would be free from

every encumbrance, and began patiently to uproot the jungle. The task was wearisome, doubly wearisome to those delicate hands which had never yet known labour, but the worker worked steadfastly on throughout the day. By nightfall the space was cleared.

And now, where the brushwood had grown, there arose slowly and painfully a square foundation and platform, four uneven walls, and a primitive roof of tiles very awkwardly adjusted but strong and weather-tight. The construction of that small uncouth building was the work of many weeks, during which Náráyan, the wealthy young Brahman, toiled hard

NOTE.—Long after this Chapter was written, the writer heard the Rev. Dr. Husband of Rajputana relate in a missionary address a story similar to this of the temple.

and ate his bread in the sweat of his brow. From early dawn till sundown he worked, nor thought of rest until one evening, leaning wearily against the garden door with his now scarred and roughened hands clasped nervously before him, he looked down upon his finished task, and as he looked his austere features became irradiated by a great joy. He was making towards his ideal.

The hidden life of serene contemplation which had of late possessed him, would now be perfected by an outward expression of devotion. A pilgrimage to the shrine or shrines of the Healing *Awatár*, now his chosen divinity, being meantime impossible, he had with his own hands built a temple to His Name.

Yet there was something not

Hindu in this young devotee. He was half conscious of this as he stood before his rude little erection. Why had he not opened the great iron chest which contained his treasure, and weighed out the gold and counted the gems in presence of the elders of the village? Why had he not rather superintended the progress of a gorgeous building rising under the hands of skilled builders, from the most commanding site in the neighbourhood, a building of massive hewn-stone foundations, solid walls, delicate carvings, and golden dome? Why was not the dedication accompanied by all possible pomp and ceremony, with processions, music, feasting, and costly offerings? Why?

With morning light Náráyan rose and hastened to prepare for worship. Punyapur still slept

while he bathed, other worshippers were still in dreamland when he knelt before his little shrine, bearing in his hand the sweetest garland which the garland-maker could supply.

But—the shrine was empty, his temple was without a god!

CHAPTER VII.

THE rains had come and gone, the rich but short-lived green was already fading. Drawn by a sudden impulse Náráyan again opened the garden door and looked out upon the jungle. He had become calm once more, and could even smile this evening as he recalled the fruitless labour of nine months ago. Already the cleared space was covered with the swift growth of a season, the little building was clothed with soft moss, the roof was evidently displaced. The young man crossed to the spot and looked within.

The shrine was no longer empty, for the seed of a pipal tree had lodged in the centre, and striking root, had sprung up slender and straight and

strong, and was even now gently yet forcefully displacing the tiles as it made its way upwards towards the sun.

Náráyan read the parable. With his hand upon the roof of the little shrine he vowed a solemn vow. He also, like the young pipal tree, would break through all restraints, and from this day forth would be an active seeker after light.

CHAPTER VIII.

HITHERTO, Náráyan had jealously guarded his precious secret. Since the morning upon which he had visited old Káshináth to enquire of him whether he knew the Healer legend or no, he had shunned even the hill-temple. The vision of the dim Figure Who yet loomed so large before heart and imagination was too sacred, possibly also too vague, to be revealed.

But the time had come when he must needs speak. Action in some direction was made necessary by his vow, and he dared not move without the counsel of one wiser and more experienced in religious matters than himself. None was so fitted to give such counsel as

Káshináth. The solitary and rigorous life of this old Brahman had not only separated him from the grosser forms of worship, it had given him a rare insight. Certainties indeed he had none, and his beliefs were few, but even in old age he was susceptible to fresh impulse and open to clearer vision. Náráyan therefore told his tale with full assurance of sympathy, but he was hardly prepared for the intensity of interest shown by his hearer, nor for the rigid questioning which followed his narration. The priest insisted upon an exact account of the occasion upon which his friend had heard the legend, even to the appearance of the pundit who had recited it; and was eager to discover his motive for doing so, as Náráyan insisted was the case, at a marriage feast. The young

man had often asked this question of himself and had no reasonable suggestion to offer.

At length Káshináth fell into deep meditation, and Náráyan being worn out in body and mind, lay down to rest at his feet. It was evening ere the conversation was resumed.

“My son,” said the old priest, “this tale of thine passes all tales that have ever fallen upon these ears. Many thoughts have arisen within me, of these I cannot now speak. For when thou art gone I shall have time to meditate upon this great marvel, that this *Awatár* should have come and gone, and that even His name should be unknown to us. The first step is most plain, Náráyan Rao, which is enough meantime for thee and for me. To thee, thou favoured one, was this revelation given that

thou mightest seek to know more. There can be no further rest for thee. Thou art the slave of the Healer, thou must find for thyself all knowledge of Him, then must thou return with thy knowledge to thy people. Thy life, my son, cannot be as other lives; the gods have themselves loosed thee from the bonds of a household. Go then, find His shrine, worship, and return. Would that I were young, then would I go with thee."

"Thy words echo my heart's desire," replied the young man. "But, my father, how can I leave the great temple of Punyapur, tended by my fathers these many hundred years? Alas, that I have no brother, no son, to perform my duties!"

"Think not of the temple, my son; I shall myself offer

daily until thy return. Close thou the *wádá*, and go upon thy pilgrimage in peace."

"I shall leave the *wádá* before dawn on the morrow," said Náráyan joyfully.

"There is one more matter whereof I would speak," the old priest said, as they stood hand in hand upon the brow of the hill. "Son, it is to the pure in life, to those who choose austerity rather than pleasure, fasting rather than feasting, meditation rather than action, that revelations of the gods are made; and if the legend of this Healing One be true and He be such as thy words have pictured, there is the greater need that His devotees be apart from other men. Art thou prepared?"

"I am prepared." The reply was spoken low and with bowed

head. But he did not add that since the day upon which memory had recalled to him the long-forgotten tale, he had practised, in name of the Healing One, the strictest austerities.

The two friends tenderly embraced and parted ; the elder to keep vigil throughout the night and to ponder the strange story which he had heard ; the younger to make hasty preparations for a long absence from home.

The stars were still twinkling, and the earth still slept, when Náráyan, in pilgrim garb, stole silently out of the village, and took his journey towards the far distant city of Morwára.

PART II.

AT THE VILLAGE

OF THE

TWELVE RIVERS

PART II.

AT THE VILLAGE
OF THE
TWELVE RIVERS.

*“ He cometh still
When any seek to know and do
His will ;
When any earth-born child, 'mid
shadows dim,
Yearneth for closer intercourse
with Him.”*

CHAPTER I.

ON the outskirts of the district whereof Morwára is capital lies Bárahnadi, the Village of the Twelve Rivers. For years the ambition of the missionaries during the touring season had been to reach this village, but year after year they had failed ; heavy rains had driven them back, or some of the staff had broken down, or the work nearer head-quarters had proved absorbing. Thus the source and course of the Twelve Rivers as well as their mysterious disappearance from the geographical features of the surrounding country were still matters for amused speculation in the mission circle until the cold season tour of the year 1895, when a small party, to their unbounded

satisfaction, accomplished the journey.

They rode into the village before sundown, and soon found an ideal spot for their encampment. From the tent door they looked across a narrow valley towards the hills over which they had just travelled. *Bárahnađi*, a typical Hindu village, lay along this valley. Three or four tanks, apparently sacred, formed its centre. There were several clusters of small temples around these, and the visitors could almost discern, though daylight was waning, the groups of half-naked Brahmans who fattened no doubt upon the consciousness of sin and of spiritual need which burdened the simple folk of the neighbourhood. The huts of the villagers were meantime represented by a thick overhanging cloud of smoke ; it was the hour

of the evening meal. Decision was given by the leader of the little band that all should rest for the evening after their long march, and should explore for missionary purposes in the early morning.

The aloneness and silence of the camping-ground were very grateful. It was beyond earshot of village sounds, and not a building was near save a ruinous and apparently disused temple with an old hut beside it. The whole party retired early, and slept immediately.

To be gently awakened ere long. A living voice had stolen upon the still air, a singularly soft, pure voice, modulated to tones low yet penetrating, such sounds as would soothe rather than arouse a sleeper at hand, yet might be heard clearly by a listener at a distance. The

accents were those of a Brahman, the words he spoke were words of adoration, self-abandonment, and passionate desire after his God, and when at length words failed, the voice broke into heavy anguished sobs.

John Ferrier, the missionary in the nearest tent, lay motionless, intently following this strange appeal. But when at length the sobs died away into silence, he began to think that he had dreamed, and that the dream was over.

Presently, however, new sounds broke the stillness, those of rapidly approaching footsteps. The missionary, now fully awake, arose from his couch, and stood within the door of his tent. The footsteps ceased and a second voice spoke, hardly above a whisper :—

“ Art thou awake, holy man ? ”

“What?”—it was the first voice again—“Art thou come again? Be seated.”

“Holy man, I have neither eaten nor slept these two days; thy strange tale of the Healing *Awatár* has bewitched me. I would hear more of Him to-night.”

“Two days hast thou fasted, and desired to hear more! What then thinkest thou of weeks, months, it may be years of seeking? What if thou must seek until life’s end?”

“Deny me not, holy man, but this once more show to me the whole legend, thou mayest in the telling recall some forgotten clue.”

“Alas! thy two days’ fast has not revealed even this to thee that he who, renouncing all else, fixes his whole being upon one Object alone, plays not with

clues as does a child with flowers. His feet tread down thorns, he feels them not; his hand handles, his mouth receives, his throat swallows the fare which keeps his body in life, he neither knows nor tastes; eyes and ears straining after Vision and Voice, see and hear naught else. Forget any clue! Never. Yet, though thou can'st hear from me nothing further than thou hast already heard, thou shalt have thy desire; hearken then this once again, for my hurt is healed and to-morrow I leave Bárahñadi in search of further knowledge."

"He, Bráhma, of whom thou and I know nothing save that He lives and moves in all living and moving things, becoming grieved for the evils and sorrows which burden the existence of men—when I know not, in what

manner I know not, with what precise end I know not, for sorrow and evil continue unto this day—took upon Him a human body, that He might live with man and understand man's life. He came to some part of the land, He took a name as did other *Awatárs*, a name unknown to me for I heard it not aright. He was born, He lived as child, youth, man, the pain of every sufferer became His pain and He chose the trade of the Healer. There have been many *Awatárs*, brother, but never was there one like this. As I have told thee many times He failed in nothing, save that He failed to save Himself from the baseness and wickedness of those for whom He toiled. To me, His slave, it seems that He fell upon an evil time and an evil part of the land ; for who that met such

an One dare deny that He was no less than a great and wondrous *Awatár*. Alas, alas, the men of His city seized and dragged the Healing One before the *Sirkar*.¹ He was tried in their Court, and the death sentence was passed upon Him.”

“What was the charge against Him? The English *Sirkar* pronounces not the death sentence for naught. Holy man, I like not this part of thy tale. Could not thy Healing One save Himself?”

“I but tell thee the legend as it has returned to my thoughts. In every part are strange matters which I understand not, how then can I make them plain to thee? To-morrow, as I have told thee, I go towards the city where first I heard of the Healer that

¹ Government.

I may learn further of Him and may visit His shrine. Meantime, hear thou the end. I know not the charge which was brought against Him; I know only that He died. His friends—they were but few and of low caste—buried His body in a grave as do the Mussulmans, and His soul entered upon another Birth. After this the tale mingles with strange visions which I fear to tell. Wilt thou go with me that we may together worship in His temple? Wilt thou choose the life of the seeker?”

“Nay, holy man, thou must seek thy Healer alone, I worship in the temples of my fathers, the austere life is not for me. But, tell me, did'st thou hear nothing of His countenance? Was this *Awatár* godlike?”

“I heard nothing”—the voice was now sad and weary.

“I tell thee this *Awatár* of thine is Krishna himself returned to earth in another form.”

The reply to this flippantly spoken conjecture was a loud and exceedingly bitter cry of sudden sharp pain, which rent the air and was echoed again and again amongst the surrounding hills. The missionary hastily prepared to join the speakers. But ere he left his tent he saw that which sent him back to his seat rejoicing. A figure, that no doubt of the village Brahman, was retreating hastily down the slope towards his home, while from the adjoining tent another figure had come silently forth, that of the wise and saintly old catechist, Daudbhai. He then had heard, and he, none better, could deal with this strangely met seeker after Christ. John Ferrier watched him as he dis-

appeared through the thicket which separated the huts from the old temple, and breathlessly awaited the new conversation.

CHAPTER II.

DAUDBHAI was the first to speak.

“Brother,” he said quietly, “I have met with Him Whom thou seekest.”

“Thou? Who then art thou?”

“I am a simple and unlearned man of Marátha caste. Years ago—it is a true word—I met the Healer. I know Him well, I speak with Him daily.”

“Thou?”

“Yes, I. And sure I am that He sent me to Bárahñadi this night that I might meet with thee. My son, wilt thou have a token? Thou hast forgotten His name; listen then, was not the Name of the Healer *Yeshu*?” Daudbhai had touched the right chord at the very outset. He knew also when to be silent as well as how to speak. The token of the forgotten Name was a sure

one ; at sound of it the deep sobs broke forth afresh, but not now as the language of concentrated and grievous emotions, rather that of sudden and unlooked-for relief. Daudbhai was perfectly still until the storm had spent itself.

The Brahman's tone had changed greatly when at length he resumed the conversation. Hope, expectation, impatience, now struggled for utterance.

“He is not then dead? He has not left the land? Lead me to His presence. Yet, no, Marátha, I fear Him. Thinkest thou that He will receive me? I have fasted and watched. I have practised the strictest austerity. I am rich and desire to lay at His feet all that I possess.”

“My son, He asks not for thy vigils and austerities. He needs not thy wealth. It is not thus that thou mayest win His favour.”

“How then can I approach Him? Does He dwell in some secret shrine? He has spoken with thee, will He deny me?”

“Brahman, did'st thou not hear that His heart desires nothing save health and peace and joy? That His word to all is—‘Come, I give rest?’”

“Lead me to Him. Hasten, Marátha, I pray thee. Knowest thou not that the starving man brooks no delay when he knows that food is at hand?”

“And he in whose hand is food delays not to feed the hungry. Sit down again, my son, and wait one moment in silence. I would speak with Him for thee ere I speak of Him to thee.

“Marátha,” said the Brahman as the prayer ceased, “thou did'st speak with one at the door of thy lips!”

“True, and my lips need not

have formed the words. Dost thou not understand, friend? He needs not eyes to see nor ears to hear. He is in this place, as in all places, He is with thee and with me at this moment. He took upon Him—this great Son of God—a body, only because we, the deaf and the blind ones, could not of ourselves hear or see or know Him, even though He is never far from any one of His creatures.”

“Art thou then a holy man, absorbed in God?”

“Would that I were. Alas, I am but a foolish child in His sight. But He is gracious, and it is to the child-like that He reveals Himself. My son, I am an old man and the night grows chill; let us enter this old temple, that I may show thee all that has been revealed to me.”

CHAPTER III.

THE news of the morning perplexed the mission party greatly. The young Brahman had disappeared. No trace of him was found in temple or in hut. He had given no hint to Daudbhai that they would not meet again, and although it was remembered that he had in his conversation with the village youth announced his intention of going on at once to Morwára, where first he had heard of the Healer, it had not seemed necessary surely to him after his conversation with the Christian teacher to continue that journey.

Half of the population of the village gathered around the missionary encampment ere the day had well begun, and the people were found very willing

to tell what little they knew of the holy man, and of his manner of life since his arrival at Bárahñadi.

He had come amongst them some weeks before, a solitary pilgrim, whence or whither bound they could not tell. He had been detained in the village by an accident which temporarily lamed him somewhat seriously. He had declined to mingle with the life of the village, pleading his pilgrimage vow, and had retired to the old temple in which he had lived ever since. He had performed many acts of merit, but in a manner so unusual as to cause much discussion, some of the leading men regarding him as mad, whilst others decided that his vow was of a special and uncommon nature.

When questioned regarding these peculiarities, the fathers of

the village told of his tending the sick, feeding the poor, speaking as never before had Brahman spoken to the low and non-caste people around. The children had followed him with reverence, they were indeed even then searching for him around the temple.

At length, one day he told the legend of some hitherto unknown *Awatár*—an unlikely tale it was — which yet had greatly attracted the younger men, and withdrawn their interest, for the time-being, from their daily duties.

Upon the whole the leaders of public opinion at Bárahnadi were relieved by the disappearance from their midst of the young Brahman heretic.

Long and earnest consultation was held in the tents regarding this strange experience. But

clearly nothing could be done unless the enquirer were found to have preceded them to Morwára.

This, however, he had not done. No Brahman answering to the description given by Daudbhai had appeared in the city, nor could any reason be discovered wherefore he should have expected to find in Morwára the knowledge which he so fervently desired.

Daudbhai was unmoved by the failure to trace his catechumen. "We have lost him mean-time," he said, "but he is in safe keeping. If ever old Daudbhai met one upon whom the Lord Jesus Christ had laid His hand, it is this so strangely met, so strangely lost youth, whose name and dwelling-place and history are unknown to us. And more, Saheb, I find that we are not

lost to him, for the book which I gave to him ere we parted was not as I thought a new copy of St. Luke's Gospel, but my own copy of St. John's, wherein he will find my name and the address of the Morwára mission. I have no fear for him."

But the faithful Daudbhai was carried to his rest in the little Christian cemetery at Morwára long before anything further was heard of the Brahman enquirer of Bárahnadi.

PART III.

YESHUDÁS

PART III.

YESHUDÁS

*“I saw a Saint—How can’st
thou tell that he
Thou sawest was a Saint?
I saw one like to Christ so
luminously
. . . . his mortal taint
Seemed made his ground work
for humility.”*

CHAPTER I

“From him who was met at midnight in the ancient temple at Bárahnadi, whose name is Náráyan Ráo, the son of Rághá-vendráo of Punyapur.

“To the good Marátha Daud-bhai who dwells at Morwára and is absorbed in the service of Yeshu, Peace.

“Be it known to thee that the King-disease¹ has seized me, and that I have seen the death-shadow. I cannot therefore come to thee. Yet there are matters whereof I would speak with thee. Make no delay, my father, but hasten hither with him who bears this. He is a sure guide.”

“Náráyan Ráo” and “Punya-pur” were no more than names,

¹ Consumption.

but the reference to the temple at Bárahnadi was a sure token. John Ferrier, the missionary who had visited Bárahnadi, accompanied by Venkatráo, a young ordained medical missionary of Brahman birth, left Morwára immediately, in prompt response to the urgency of the summons.

Four days later they entered Punyapur.

They found that their tents had been pitched, according to their host's desire, in a mango tope beyond the village wall.

Punyapur appeared to be a dying-out Hindu hamlet; fully half of the little houses on either side of the straggling irresponsible-looking lanes were falling into ruin; temples and tanks there were in abundance, but only one house of any pretension, rich, no doubt, in genuine old blackwood, but dreary and

unkept and rendered even more cheerless by a very jungle of a compound in its rear. Low hills surrounded the village, upon one of which was perched a time and storm-darkened temple. Such was John Ferrier's first impression of the home of Náráyan Ráo, the son of Rághá-vendráo.

CHAPTER II.

HUMAN interest curiously alters even the outward aspect of house, or street, or landscape. On the evening of their arrival, John Ferrier and Venkatráo wandered through and around the village with Náráyan Ráo himself, listening to the history of his life told in those well-remembered haunting tones. The spell of the place and of the man fell upon them as they walked. They peopled the spacious empty hall and verandahs of the old *wádá* with ghosts; a stern and conventional Brahman priest, a sweet serious Hindu woman, his wife; and flitting hither and thither a shadowy child - bride, regarding whom words were few and tender. And as these faded there stood forth

the form of a desolate lad being gradually comforted by the blessed vision of a "Healer."

The jungly compound was a consecrated spot. For here had arisen a rude little shrine to the unknown God; and the young pipal tree overshadowing its now crumbling ruins had carried an angel message.

The hill with its grey block of building was hallowed by the memory of the counsel which sent forth a young seeker into the unknown world in search of truth and light.

They gathered at eventide upon the steps of that hill temple and sang an evening hymn. Tears rained down the face of the old man, its priest. Náráyan Ráo,—*Yeshu-dás*,¹ so he desired to be named—stood

¹ Bond servant of Jesus.

somewhat apart, seeing surely far beyond the gorgeous western horizon upon which his eyes were fixed, for his austere and sadly emaciated features were radiant as with the reflection of the unveiled glory of his King. The countenance of the young Brahman spoke much, and promised more. Sorrow, perplexity, the ascetic life, the season of detachment, of high and pure contemplation of a Dream-Figure, followed by the unwearied search after One Whom his lofty spirit could call Master, each phase had left its indelible mark upon those features. Yet all were softened by a serene and holy joy, for he had found his Master, and had proved Him to be gracious beyond his highest conception. The face and figure were formed after the purest Brahman type, intellect and

grace predominating rather than strength.

Káshináth the priest was a very old frail man, shrunken and shadowy and wrinkled. He had now attained to the perfect peace, he had become deeply and fully satisfied. Yeshudás might have questions to ask, difficulties to solve, plans for the future—though not for himself—to form and to carry out; Káshináth's earthly interest was centred in Yeshudás. A loving soul and a trustful, his prayer that evening was the innocent and confiding whisper of a little child. Yet had this man wandered for a long life-time in the dreary labyrinth of Pantheism! A mediæval saint and a simple child: thus John Ferrier characterised them in his heart.

A little girl, attracted probably by the singing, toddled

out from the crowd of followers which had dogged the party the whole afternoon. She ran straight forward to Yeshudás and pulled vigorously at his *angarkhá*. He stooped and lifted her into his arms. There she was evidently at home. The plump little hands patted his thin cheeks and played with his nose, using an irreverence such as surely mediæval saint never tolerated. This saint laughed a whole-hearted human laugh which caused the missionary once again to revise a first impression.

CHAPTER III

A LONG morning had been spent in business, and the four men therein engaged now rested in the inner verandah of the *wáddá*. John Ferrier and Venkatráo reclined upon a *chárpaí*,¹ Káshináth lay half asleep upon a *razai*, and Yeshudás sat upon the floor, and leaned his head against one of the massive blackwood pillars, a long line of which supported the roof.

“Yeshudás, my brother,” said Venkatráo suddenly, “thou hast not yet told us of thy journey homeward from Bárahadi.”

“What wilt thou have further, thou man of many questions?” asked Yeshudás playfully. “Is it not enough for thee that thou and I are here?”

¹ Bed.

“It is not enough, Yeshudás,” said John Ferrier. “We have still many unanswered questions. Here are but a few. What were thy thoughts whilst thou wert detained at Bárahnadi? What led thee to expect to hear of the Healer at Morwára? What were thy first thoughts — if thou can’st tell them—when Yeshu Himself was made known to thee by Daudbhai? Why did’st thou leave Bárahnadi without further word with the old man? Thou seest we hunger for much knowledge!”

“I answer the Saheb’s last question first. I knew not that the good Marátha would think further of the stranger who had disturbed his rest, and I was in great haste to carry the good news to him who waited and prayed alone at Punyapur.” This was said with a tender

glance towards the old priest. "And regarding those weeks at Bárahnadi, how can I speak? Here, in my own house, I had desired a temple for the Healer. There, as it now seems to me, the lad Náráyan made of his heart a temple and placed in it an image of his own dreamings. Then came the Healer Himself and swept the image out of the temple, saying to Náráyan, its priest—'This is my Father's House.' Was it not so?"

"In one matter thou wert very Christian," remarked John Ferrier. "How camest thou to think of tending the sick and suffering?"

He smiled. "That is a simple tale, Saheb. One day Náráyan was very sorrowful. The fever of his desire burned with a great heat. He had no rest. Then

said a voice within him, 'Arise, Náráyan Ráo, be thou also a healer.' Náráyan arose and obeyed the voice, and his fever left him. Then came the messenger of the Healer, as ye know."

"Wilt thou tell us his message?" asked Venkatráo reverently, for he had loved the old man Daudbhai as a son.

"His message? Thou knowest it well. 'The Healer is near thee, the Healer loves thee, it is He who has spoken in thy heart and has caused thee to hunger after Him. Speak to Him, He will answer thee; yield thyself to Him, He will dwell within thee. He has no shrine save in the hearts of His bond servants, and He dwells there not as a dream of their imaginings, but as the living reigning King of their

lives. Thou wilt learn to know His will from this little book.' Such was the Marátha's message. Would that I had seen him once again.

"Náráyan heard with great joy," he continued after a pause. "He worshipped Yeshu as Daudbhai had done, and a great peace filled his soul. In the morning he arose with renewed strength, and travelled along the jungle paths for many miles without weariness. It seemed as if the weakly Náráyan had been left behind, and the new Yeshudás had taken his place.

"At noon he rested, and opened the Book. A black mark had been made around the story of Petrus. He read, and it was as though he read of himself" — here the voice thrilled with the recollection—
'One of those who heard of Yeshu

was one Daudbhai of Morwára. He findeth the young Náráyan of Punyapur at Bárahnadi at midnight, and saith unto him—‘I have found the Healer.’ He brought him to Yeshu. Yeshu looked upon him and said, ‘Thou art Náráyan the son of Rághá-vendráo ; thou shalt be called Yeshudás.’ Thus Náráyan died that Yeshudás might live.”

“Was not the Book very difficult to understand?”

“The Book is difficult,” he replied, “but we have read it many times, and each time it seemed that we knew more of Him, and understood better His thought. Yeshu became to us Living Bread, Living Water ; we hungered and thirsted no more.”

“Tell us more of thy journey,” said Venkatráo.

“Yes, I will tell thee more,”

and the brown eyes had a laugh in their depths, "poor Yeshudás grew weary! He hungered and thirsted for other than Living Bread and Water; the sun and the scorching winds fevered his skin, his head ached, his eyes burned, his feet blistered! He was fain to seek out a little village where he might satisfy his body with bath, rest, and food! What wilt thou further?"

CHAPTER IV.

YESHUDÁS was a dying man. Venkatráo confirmed his own conviction, the disease had taken a firm grip of his constitution, and the skill of the young doctor could do no more than mitigate suffering, and possibly lengthen his life by a few weeks.

The fact was frankly acknowledged according to his own desire. There was no sadness for him in it, nor for Kashináthpant. They had studied the later chapters of their Book¹ to purpose, both were entirely at rest regarding the future, and were inclined to wonder that their new friends should sorrow.

This was for the Christians a

¹ It will be remembered that the book was St. John's Gospel.

curious, possibly a unique experience. They now lived in daily companionship with men who had received their Christian faith and knowledge practically without human mediation ; who accepted and acted upon the commands of Christ without any conventional modifications, yet were in ignorance of the simplest usages of the Christian Church. The delight of Yeshudás in these as they were gradually unfolded during many conferences was a joy to the older Christians such as they had never before experienced.

Sunday came round, and when the four met as usual at the hill-temple for morning prayer, John Ferrier explained the history, practice, and use of the Christian Lord's - Day. Yeshudás grasped the mighty thought of the communion of saints.

“I see, my friend,” he exclaimed, “We are not alone, we are not even four; we adore together, those in far past ages, those in far off lands. Yeshu, our Lord, He is our Bond, His rising from the dead its symbol. *Jai, jai, jai,*¹ to our King this day!” It was an Easter Anthem, glorious and thrilling as that of the noblest minster choir.

They spoke also of the other symbols of the Faith, of Baptism, and of the Sacred Feast. They explained how beneath their apparent simplicity there lay hidden depths of meaning, to be sounded only by the loving heart which is in touch with its Lord’s own love.

For this fresh revelation of the pity and forethought of his

¹ Victory, victory, victory!

Lord, Yeshudás was unprepared. He made no remark at all, but rose abruptly and left the company. They saw him no more that day.

CHAPTER V.

JOHN FERRIER watched Yeshudás and Venkatráo one morning from his tent as they sauntered under the mango trees in friendly converse. The two young men, in their relation the one to the other, interested him greatly.

Venkatráo was a very fine man, fine by nature, further refined by experience and by education. He had probably a great future before him. But he was not, as he was himself fully aware and generously acknowledged, so great a man as was this uneducated brother Brahman. In all save education indeed he was greatly his inferior. He did not always understand Yeshudás, and he looked up to him already with a tender

reverence such as the "Beloved Physician" of old doubtless felt towards his companion of the great soul but weakly body.

This seemed to John Ferrier a natural condition of things, and most salutary for the young doctor, but the attitude of Yeshudás towards Venkatráo was not a little perplexing. From the very moment of their meeting Venkatráo had apparently fascinated him. He watched every movement, listened eagerly for his every word, would have served him had the other permitted it with his own hands. His eyes lighted when he met those of Venkatráo, he was never happier than when they two were together. Did Yeshudás in his own bodily weakness find pleasure in his friend's splendid physique? Who could tell?

Later in the day the contrast between the two men was seen in a passing conversation.

John Ferrier and Venkatráo were reading aloud a recent biography. Yeshudás joined them, and throwing himself down at their feet, requested them to continue reading. Venkatráo read on, translating rapidly a chapter of the religious history of a good man loyally devoted to the service of Christ, yet a martyr to haunting doubts and weary continual sense of failure. Yeshudás listened attentively for a time, but soon showed signs of impatience and perplexity.

At length the reader ceased, and looked down enquiringly.

"I understand him not," he said, "he was a good and a holy man, but Venkatráo, my friend, was he *well*? To me

it seems that he did not allow the Healer to lay His cooling hand upon him, and to rebuke the fever of his spirit."

"Yeshudás, didst thou never doubt that He cared for thee?"

"Never."

"Didst thou never question whether thou thyself wert not unworthy of His grace?"

"Brother, is not thy life and mine one long unworthiness, one long yearning after worthiness? Is not this the fever of the spirit? But if His hand touch the spirit surely the fever is gone? 'Rest thou in Me. Upon Me is thy worthiness.' Is not this verily the Good News?"

Venkatráo closed the book and read no more that day, but wandered far over the hills in lonely meditation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE first public Christian service was about to be held in the village square.

John Ferrier and Venkatráo stood upon the platform of the temple to which the child Náráyan had been wont to bring his daily offerings long years before. Káshináthpant and Yeshudás rested at the roots of an ancient banyan tree. The whole population of the village gathered round, even the women sat huddled together at a little distance. The men stood in groups, each of which represented a party. For, as was to be expected, Punyapur was greatly disturbed by the advent of the missionaries, and party spirit ran high.

Hovering near Yeshudás were

several young men whom John and Venkatráo had met in private; they held Káshináth and Yeshudás in great reverence, and were prepared to listen attentively. Opposite were five half-clothed Brahmans whose scowling brows and muttered threats revealed determined opposition. Facing the platform at a little distance was a large group of old and young, these were uncommitted, interested yet doubtful. The rest of the audience were probably ignorant of that which was taking place in their midst. They listened to John Ferrier's simple opening words as a village crowd listens for the first time, with more curiosity than comprehension.

It had been decided that Venkatráo should take the burden of this gathering. It

was pre-eminently an occasion for the Indian preacher rather than the European. Venkatráo was also fitted, so John Ferrier conceived, in a peculiar manner for the delicate task which lay before them should the plans which Yeshudás had formed for his native village be carried out. He understood perfectly the Brahman standpoint. He was attractive as a man, eloquent as a speaker, and skilful as a physician, he had in fact already with marked success treated several serious cases of illness.

His first few sentences were spoken quietly, under severe self-repression. Yeshudás who had leaned forward in an eager and expectant attitude drew back as if disappointed. Presently, however, his natural eloquence broke the bonds within which the preacher had tried to

restrain it, and he spoke such words and in such manner as is only possible to a true Oriental under unusual emotion.

He was speedily interrupted, by Yeshudás himself, who rose suddenly from his seat and moved swiftly and noiselessly to the platform. Venkatráo paused in surprise, which did not lessen when without apology the younger man continued the address.

“My brothers,” he said, “there are those standing here this day who have cried ‘Give us proof of the words that this *Yeshu Awatár* hears the voices of men, and answers their requests.’ I, Yeshudás, have given many such proofs; this day adds yet one more for me and for you.

“You have heard—how many times?—that it was from the lips of a Brahman youth that

I first heard the tale of the Healer, and it is known to many that to see that youth once again, to hear him again tell that tale, to speak with him face to face, has been the prayer of my heart in the presence of my Lord. My father, hath it not been thus?"

"It hath been thus, my son," replied the old man promptly, although manifestly bewildered by the appeal.

"Yet how could it be?" continued Yeshudás, "dying men travel not, and who would have dreamed that the youth would be sent hither? But, praised be His great Name, my Lord has granted the request of His servant, He has sent that very youth even to Punyapur. Is it not so?" he added, turning to Venkatráo.

"It is, I think, impossible,"

replied Venkatráo in low tones. "Thou hast, my brother, mistaken me for another. I have been few years in the service of our Lord."

But Yeshudás was unshaken. "It needed but thy voice, the motion of thy hand to reveal thee to me ; I am not mistaken. Tell me, didst thou not preach of Yeshu after the marriage of the son of Vishnupant of Morwára with my sister?"

Venkatráo started. The question recalled an experience which, as John Ferrier well knew, was most painful to him. He bent his head humbly, as under an accusation which he dared not deny. When he spoke again, his voice was trembling.

"Yeshudás, my friend, thou hast recalled that for which I can never forgive myself, for

which I question whether my Master can ever forgive me. I did preach—was that young bride thy sister?—but I preached in scorn of Jesus, and of His servant. In ignorance I did it, brother, but not without compunction. And even as I spoke I knew as by a strong light flashed upon the darkness of my spirit that the tale which I related in scorn was truth and no fable. Yeshudás, brother, forgive. My repentance has been sore; yet my sin has followed me, aye, to this day.” The last words were almost lost as he bowed low in sore humiliation.

How would the destruction of his long-cherished ideal affect Yeshudás? John Ferrier waited breathlessly. The nearer listeners waited curiously. Vishnupant waited in manifest perplexity. Venkatráo waited with

pale features and haggard eyes, almost in terror, as for the verdict of his judge.

He need not have feared. If for one moment a shadow crossed his brow, it passed immediately, there was nothing save sympathy in Yeshudás' unspoken response to his friend's appeal. As by one impulse their hands met in a strong clasp, and they stepped down together from the platform and walked hand in hand up the street until they disappeared within the *wádá*.

Thus ended the first Christian preaching in Punyapur.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Morwára visitors had now been several weeks at Punyapur, and not a little business had been transacted. There was, indeed, much to be done, and as his growing weakness warned them, Yeshudás had not long time left.

Although the temple profits were now gone, Yeshudás was a comparatively wealthy man, and his one remaining care was that his property in land and jewels should be turned to the best possible account for the glory of his Master and for the good of Punyapur. Daily conferences were held until definite plans lay before the workers. Then the *wáddá* was handed over to masons and carpenters, orders for furniture and other neces-

saries were despatched, schools and dispensary work were commenced, the village was soon as active as it had been deserted.

Activity centred in the *wáddá*. The east wing had been already transformed into a schoolhouse, the front rooms on either side of the arched gateway were fitted up as dispensary and consulting-rooms for Venkatráo, the rooms overlooking the garden would become, when Yeshudás no longer required them, the house of the superintendent of the Christian settlement.

The hall, which was its owner's delight, was set apart for worship. It would eventually be the village church. No decoration was required here, for the new windows not only admitted air and light, they served also to reveal the hidden beauty of the room. Two rows of slender inlaid

pillars spanned by fluted arches supported the massive black-wood roof and divided the space into three long aisles. Chapel furniture in keeping with the room had already arrived, and now awaited the departure of the workmen.

The compound had been cleared, and divided into two equal portions as playgrounds for the children. A railing had been run around the remains of the little temple and pipal tree, for Yeshudás had expressed the wish that he and Káshináthpant should be laid to rest there when their time should come.

Steps had been taken to introduce a new industry to the village, in hope that it would revive and become flourishing as of old. Venkatráo had offered for a time at least to superintend the work which must be left

unfinished by him who was the organiser of the whole.

Public services were now held daily, as also classes for such as desired instruction. These were well attended ; but beneath the surface were bitter distrust and opposition. Strange Brahmans from the surrounding district gathered in the village and made no secret of their hatred of the reformers and of their reforms. Yeshudás was apparently unconscious of this, he offered a genial welcome to every stranger and spoke gracious words to the surliest of his fellow-villagers. But Venkatráo was alert.

“I like not these Brahmans,” he remarked to John Ferrier. “I shall not leave Yeshudás day or night until the end comes.”

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was Saturday night, and all was ready for the festival. On the morrow the chapel would be formally dedicated to its proper use, and at the same service Káshináthpant and Yeshudás would be received by baptism as the first members of the Punyapur, Christian Church. In the evening a Communion service would be held.

They had met in the chapel this evening for a quiet service of prayer, and had lingered in the verandah until very late, speaking as men rarely do, heart to heart. Such a conversation cannot be chronicled. But long afterwards, John Ferrier maintained that that evening spent in communion with three sons of the east, who rendered a pas-

sionate homage to the Saviour whom he also worshipped in the calm and reserved manner natural to his race, contained the most sacred moments of his life.

They parted at midnight. John Ferrier retired alone to his tent, Venkatráo having, for reasons already hinted, slept of late in the *wádá* with Yeshudás and Káshináthpant.

John Ferrier was called at early dawn. Yeshudás was ill, and wished to see him at once.

He noticed as he approached the *wádá* that the light shone not from his private room but from the chapel window. Thither therefore he hastened.

A single lamp stood upon the communion table, and cast long eerie shadows over the long hall. By its light Ferrier made out the group of three. Yeshudás lay upon the floor, his head resting

upon the arm of old Káshináth. Venkatráo bent over him, apparently arranging a bandage.

A few words explained what was required. Yeshudás could not live until morning and wished to be baptised at once. Hasty arrangements were made, and in a very few moments the simple rite had been performed which declared this Yeshudás to be a member of the Brotherhood on earth. He was very weak, and the vow was made by sign only. But he found strength for a second sign, that Káshináth must also receive the sacrament. This done, he bade them farewell with a glad smile, closed his eyes, and was gone from earth.

As John Ferrier stooped to look upon the face of him whom they had loved, he noticed that which greatly startled him. There was blood upon his gar-

ments and also upon the carpeted floor. He glanced enquiringly towards Venkatráo but received no immediate answer. Later, when they had laid him down, the young doctor told the story of the end.

Yeshudás had laid himself down immediately after Ferrier left them, but was somewhat restless. At length he rose and left his room, followed by both Káshináth and Venkatráo. The latter feared he knew not what, and had determined that not for one moment should he lose sight of his friend.

Yeshudás entered the chapel and fell prostrate in prayer, the others stood aside and waited.

Suddenly a slight cry aroused them from their thoughts and they hastened forward. They were too late, however, to save Yeshudás from the hand of a

murderer, who had already done his work and slipped out into the darkness whence he came.

Thus Yeshudás died a martyr's death, and the little church of Punyapur was consecrated in blood.

